

## Information on the Proposed Science Waiver from United States Department of Education (US ED)



### **Why do we need a new science assessment?**

Alaska's science assessment is changing in order to accurately assess student mastery of the updated science standards, the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska (SSAs)*, adopted in June 2019. The state's previous science assessment, the Alaska Science Assessment, measured the Science Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) adopted in 2006. The new science assessment is called the PEAKS Science Assessment.

### **Why did Alaska adopt new science standards?**

Alaska's previous science standards were 13 years old. Alaska educators agreed that advances have since taken place in the world of science and in our understanding of how students learn science effectively. The new standards align with national science standards and include Alaska specific content. Please visit the [K-12 Science Standards for Alaska webpage](#) for more information.

### **How are the updated Alaska Science Standards different from the GLEs?**

- The new SSAs are based on the National Research Council's (NRC) *A Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas*, which emphasizes the critical thinking and communication skills that students need for postsecondary success.
- The updated standards include grades K-12, unlike the GLEs that were for grades 3-12. They are organized by grade and then by domains—life sciences, physical sciences, earth and space sciences, and engineering and technology.

### **Why is Alaska applying for a waiver?**

In spring 2021, DEED wants to administer the new PEAKS Science Assessment as a full-census field test in grades 5, 8, and 10 in lieu of the Alaska Science Assessment. To do this, Alaska needs a waiver from specific requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). If Alaska does not seek a waiver, students in grade 4, 8 and 10 would be tested using the previous Alaska Science Assessment. This means that students in grades 8 and 10 would need to take both the Alaska Science Assessment and the PEAKS Science Assessment in spring 2021.

Alaska will change the grades assessed in science from 4, 8, and 10 to 5, 8, and 10 to more accurately reflect the way the grades are grouped in the SSAs. This change is based on feedback received from educators participating in the test development process. If the waiver is approved, Alaska teachers have an additional year to teach the new standards in the classroom prior to students being assessed in the new standards.

### **What is the timeline for the new assessment?**

If Alaska receives a waiver from the United States Department of Education or US ED, the Alaska Science Assessment would not be administered any longer. The new PEAKS Science Assessment field test would

be administered in spring 2021. A fully operational PEAKS Science Assessment would be administered in spring 2022 and subsequent years.

If Alaska does NOT receive a waiver from US ED, the Alaska Science Assessment would be administered in 2021 to students in grades 4, 8, and 10. Additionally, the new PEAKS Science Assessment field test would be administered to students in grades 5, 8, and 10.

**How can I provide feedback about the waiver?**

Feedback can be submitted by completing a [short \(3-question\) statewide survey](#) by **May 30, 2020**.